

## The Empire Ablaze with Revolution.

79

as he signed himself), who played, the democrat and the evangelical Christian in order to win back his duchy, and a motley army of adventurers, did not cow the rising spirit of insurrection. Ulrich was forced, by the desertion of Hans Miiller's rustics and his Swiss mercenaries, to halt in his march on Stuttgart, and flee back to his castle of Hohentwiel before the troops of the League. "Although the Duke of Wtirtem-berg has been put to flight," wrote Geyss, councillor of the Bishop of Wurzburg, on 21st March 1525, "the peasants of Suabia continue in the same state of insurrection, and their numbers do not diminish, but increase daily. From Augsburg outwards . . . as far as Ulm, and from there . . . as far as the Lake of Constance, all the peasants and vassals are in a state of sedition and revolt. It is said that the whole land of Wurtemberg will support them." Truchsess, the League's general, routed several of these bands, some of which ran away at the first shot, and induced them to agree to arbitration, but no sooner was his back turned than the work of looting castles and monasteries went on as briskly as before. The League was for the present helpless to cope with the situation. The war in Italy had drained the country of troops, and after the victory of Pavia large numbers of the returning landsknechts would not fight against their peasant brethren, or joined their ranks. And it was soon no longer a question of rebellion in Suabia. By the summer of 1525 the revolutionary contagion had spread north, east, west—northwards into Franconia, the Odenwald, the Neckerswald, Hesse, the Rhinegau, Thuringia, Saxony, Brunswick; westwards from the Black Forest and Baden into Alsace, Lorraine, Treves; eastwards into Salzburg, Tyrol, Carinthia, Styria. The whole empire was ablaze with revolution. Verily, Luther's denunciation of the wrath of God against the princes of the earth had come to pass with a vengeance, though in a fashion in which the reformer refused to see the fulfilment of his own prognostications and warnings.

It is not easy to generalise a movement so widespread as this. We might call it a social revolution based on the Bible, and, though not exhaustive, this description holds at least of the programme adopted by the peasants of Upper Suabia at Memmingen in March 1525. The preface disclaims the